

A Pre-Administration Curriculum in a School of Public Health

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WE ARE currently faced with the need for well-qualified administrators in the health fields. The selection of persons for such positions is difficult. The hospital field, in particular, has only in fairly recent years established graduate training for persons desirous of entering this field. The first course in hospital administration was started at the University of Chicago in 1934, but there are now 13 courses in schools with membership in the Association of University Programs in Hospital Administration.

The hospital field had the advantage of a major study of problems of hospital administration and university curriculums to meet the needs in this field. The initial major study was conducted from 1945 to 1948 by a Joint Commission on Education with Charles E. Prall as director. This study was sponsored by the American College of Hospital Administrators and the American Hospital Association and received financial support from the Kellogg Foundation. The final reports were issued in 1948 and helped to focus attention on areas which required emphasis in the academic and preceptorship periods. One subsequent study

and review has already been undertaken in this field.

Basic Recommendations

The Prall study (1), although it did not give major attention to undergraduate preparation for those desiring to enter the graduate field, did make certain rather general recommendations. It suggested that extensive specialization at the undergraduate level is probably neither necessary nor wise and that a student should aim toward a well-rounded general education. But the recommendation goes on to say that "the idea of a broad basic education should not be confused with an excessive scattering of effort." More specifically, the report says:

"Students who are completing requirements for their first degree often ask what work will be most useful if later they seek admission to the courses in hospital administration. A complete answer to this question requires knowledge of the individual's past training, special qualifications, and job experience. What is offered here must, therefore, be considered in the nature of general guidance.

"If the student is not completing a major in the social studies or psychology, one or more senior college courses in each of the following should be suggested: economics, sociology or government, psychology. If he has had only the minimum requirement in science, some ad-

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vanced work in either the biological or the physical sciences would prove to be valuable. There are circumstances, of course, where a new beginning might be preferable. The individual who has had no recent contact with chemistry or biology is a case in point. A try-out in statistics, if not restricted by prerequisites, and a course in introductory accounting should be included. The last-named is the only subject mentioned thus far as a requirement for admission."

The more recent Olsen report (2) gives added emphasis to the need for more basic preparation in the field of business but, like the Prall report, notes the importance of a well-rounded general education. To the extent to which these prerequisite ideas are correct, it is apparent that such a program might be based in any of several schools, liberal arts, sociology, business administration, to mention a few. It is, however, essential that whatever school is chosen it provide adequate flexibility.

Flexibility in Planning

At the University of California, a program of this nature has been developed in the School of Public Health. The school provides an upper division curriculum. The need for drawing on many interdepartmental disciplines to supplement the fields of major concentration makes flexibility a basic element in the school's curriculum planning.

There was little difficulty, therefore, in establishing a pre-administration program of reasonable breadth, one that could be rather readily tailored to the needs of students who had completed an associate of arts or its equivalent at the college level in their first 2 years.

Some courses at the lower division level are recommended toward advanced work which the student takes after admission to the School of Public Health, but in practically all cases any student entering at the junior year can complete the remaining lower division prerequisites and the upper division requirements within 2 years. Prerequisites include at least 9 units from the social sciences; 12 from the humanities, English, and speech; and a basic biological science, beginning accounting, and a

survey course of the health fields. When possible, a basic law course is recommended at the lower division level. Emphasis at the undergraduate level for the relatively few students who indicate an interest as early as their freshman year is toward a broad educational background and one which will allow them a maximum diversity of selection by the time they are ready finally to choose their upper division school since by that time some students will have found interest in other directions.

Admission Requirements

Selection for admission at the upper division level in hospital pre-administration is rather stringent. All students who apply are interviewed at considerable length by a full-time faculty member of the graduate course in hospital administration and are then referred to the university counseling service for testing and counseling interviews.

Students are normally referred to a local hospital administrator for further interview and assigned brief readings in the field. There are a number of reasons for lengthy consideration at this point. Many students, whether correctly or incorrectly, wish their degree in a major in which the undergraduate degree in itself will provide an entree to specific job situations. The pre-administration major and the bachelor of science degree provide an essentially broad background and not a degree acceptable to hospitals for positions in the field of hospital administration. This is also largely true of alternate selections in the upper division in the areas of public health and medical care pre-administration.

Students who wish to enter the field of hospital administration, therefore, must be prepared to maintain an adequate grade average for acceptance by a graduate school and, in the case of the University of California, must plan on a 3-year program beyond the baccalaureate in order to complete the requirements. Students, moreover, must be provided with the facts that placement in this field, while good, means willingness to go wherever positions are available and that progression in the field requires a continuing growth of the individual over a fairly long period. The rapid changes

in hospitals and related health groups in the last 20 years, the continuing technical, economic, and human relations changes now in process call for administration with breadth and flexibility.

This means that emphasis must be placed on the fact that a considerable measure of the individual's success will depend on his own ability to prove ultimately his leadership qualities. Education can provide stimulus for the individual, provoke curiosity, and give a student the base on which to build, but education cannot provide a garment of facts and techniques in which the graduate goes forth cloaked as a leader. Although the standards established for admission do not lead to a large undergraduate body, there has been a fairly steady growth of applicants.

Because of its flexibility, the course may be used, as far as the senior year, in an alternate position with other courses not only in public health but also in premedical and other fields.

Course Requirements

The usual course for the person who has selected pre-administration in his junior year includes some 44 units of selected work in the following areas: advanced psychology (usually human relations), cultural anthropology, principles of organization and management, personnel administration, managerial accounting, industrial relations, advanced economics, biostatistics, community health education, sanitation, introduction to health administration, medical sociology and medical background, and disease control. As this leaves the student a minimum of 14 additional units, other work may be selected to fit the needs or special interest of the student. Only three units of work are devoted specifically to the hospital. These are in the form of a survey course which is also taken by students from several other areas. The various types of institutions—voluntary and governmental, general, chronic, and mental—are presented in terms of their relationships to the community and to one another, as well as in the individual setting. A major objective of the survey course has been to portray the complex nature of the hospital as an institution, the kinds of problems which it faces, and the

many interrelationships with which it is concerned.

Preceptorships

Graduate students who have shown ability in their academic work and appear otherwise personally qualified are referred to the hospital administrators who have agreed to establish special preceptorships. In a very few cases carefully selected students from other schools, who have a reasonably equivalent pre-administration background, are also referred. Some students who have graduated in other fields take an extra year of graduate work prior to the internship to make up for deficiencies. This graduate year somewhat parallels the upper division pre-administration work, and these students have then entered the preceptorship on the same basis as the regular pre-administration graduate.

The preceptorship, or administrative internship, is not dissimilar to the well-established administrative residency required in all graduate courses in hospital administration. The main difference lies in the longer period of orientation to the hospital, its departments, and related activities, the somewhat more restricted degree of responsibility placed on the student in administrative situations, and the higher demands on the administrator in terms of teaching interest.

This year of education within the hospital is clearly reflected in seminar discussion and special study during the graduate academic year. Students with this background compare favorably with others whose experience in the field may have been much longer. They not only contribute to classes, but, on the basis of actual experience, are able to derive far more from case and discussion sessions at graduate level than is possible with students lacking an experiential background. Moreover, students with a minimum 2-year background following a bachelor's degree are able to enter the administrative residency with a fairly high level of preparation.

Results

The pre-administration program has been in existence only 7 years, and students have gradu-

ated from this program only in the last 5 years. Of 27 students taking their bachelor's degree in this area, 18 have continued with the advanced program, one of whom completed his graduate study at an eastern university. Fifteen students have now completed both the undergraduate program and the preparation requirement. Of that number, 8 have also completed residencies and taken appointments in the field. The rest of the 15 are either entering into residencies or the graduate academic program during the current year. Four more of the 27 graduates are now in administrative internships.

At the undergraduate level some 10 students are currently following the pre-administrative program on the Berkeley campus. Several are enrolled in a similar pre-administration program at the University of California at Los Angeles. In the past few years, a number of students who completed basically similar undergraduate programs in other schools have been placed in internships.

None of us associated with the graduate course feel that the undergraduate program outlined here is the only pattern for development of future students in administration for health fields. We do believe that the combination of social sciences, biological sciences, the humanities, and business administration, together with some background knowledge of

the health fields, is essential for a progression such as we have outlined. Such a preparatory program, however, is possible within the structure of many schools and without undue concentration by the student. Administration provides an alternate field for capable students in premedical, business administration, and several other areas. Although the field of hospital administration, itself, provides only a limited number of positions, there are at present some 200 students a year entering graduate work in this field alone, and graduates are also taking positions in allied health fields.

Careful selection and guidance of college students with real aptitude and ability can, we believe, help to attract outstanding students to the fields of health administration. Our experience with the progress of students, even though the program is still relatively new, has been encouraging to us and has proved acceptable to students, preceptors, and faculty alike.

REFERENCES

- (1) Joint Commission on Education: The college curriculum in hospital administration. Chicago, Physicians' Record Co., 1948.
- (2) American Council on Education: University education for administration in hospitals. Menasha, Wis., George Banta Publishing Co., 1954.

Project to Combat Tuberculosis in Indians

A 3-year program to reduce tuberculosis among southwestern Indians will be conducted by the Phipps Institute of the University of Pennsylvania under contract with the Public Health Service.

The tuberculosis incidence is about nine times higher among Indians than among the non-Indian population of the United States. The institute will conduct field studies and administer drugs to assist in the prevention and treatment of the disease in about 8,700 children.

Affected by the plan will be the United Pueblos and the Jicarilla and Mescalero Apaches of New Mexico and the Consolidated Utes of Colorado. If techniques prove successful, they will be extended to other areas.